

Escapism and disassociation in the sun also rises



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In *The Sun Also Rises*, written by Ernest Hemingway, we are met with many problems faced by the lost generation after WW1, including the search for fulfillment, love, and the aimlessness of the lost generation. However, readers are also met with another and more problematic conflict.

Dissociation and escapism which is presented through the main protagonists Jacob Barnes and Lady Brett Ashley who display similarities with Maladaptive Daydreamers.

Just like those who are Maladaptive Daydreamers, Jake and Brett are constantly trying to dissociate and escape from the world around them, because they can't bear to live the life they have post-war or stand to be the people they have become, this results in them further losing their sense of self and becoming more dissatisfied.

As shown above Maladaptive daydreaming is an under researched and a unrecognized mental disorder. In a article written by Eli Somer, he describes it as a extensive fantasy activity that replaces human interaction and/or interferes with academic, interpersonal, or vocational functioning (1). The symptoms include highly vivid daydreams that are abnormally long, a strong attachment to such daydreams, inability to carry out everyday tasks, insomnia, and daydreams triggered by real life events or stimuli. Those who maladaptive daydream tend to have some other underlying mental disorders alongside it, for example, within the article it is mentioned that six patients who were identified to be maladaptive daydreamers, four were diagnosed with dissociative disorder, and two were diagnosed with narcissistic personality disorder. However, if they don't have a mental health issue, they have some sort of traumatic experience that has happened to them instead.

<https://assignbuster.com/escapism-and-disassociation-in-the-sun-also-rises/>

According to the article *Maladaptive Daydreaming: A Qualitative Inquiry*, written by Eli Somer, people who maladaptive daydream, often do so to cope with what is going on in their lives or an traumatic experience, but also as a way to express themselves. Through their daydreams they are able to disengage from stress and pain, have fulfilling fantasies, and companionship. In their dreams there is recurring themes such as violence, power, control, and an idealized-self (1). Many people view this disorder as an quirky trait, but it's much more than that, some think of it as a addiction, not being able to stop it, others view it as a much deeper issue. The issue of you not wanting to be you. Which therefore leads to them daydreaming a different world in which they are someone they want to be and are able to escape who they are in reality.

Just like the maladaptive daydreamers both Jake and Brett had gone through a traumatic experience themselves, which leads to both of them trying to disengage from themselves in order to forget and not feel the pain caused from those experiences. Jake's traumatic experience is being wounded while fighting in WW1, in which it can be assumed he also saw many horrors. Brett's traumatic case would be losing the so called love of her life in WW1, but it can also be assumed since she was a nurse during WW1 that she some horrific injuries and the deaths of other soldiers who could have possibly been under her care. Therefore, in order to forget such incidents, they try to suppress their emotions, and both start to dissociate from the world around them and themselves hoping to escape, especially Jake.

Therefore, Jake resorts to alcohol, in which he uses it to suppress his emotions, and just like any Maladaptive Daydreamer, Jake cuts ties with his
<https://assignbuster.com/escapism-and-disassociation-in-the-sun-also-rises/>

ego and insecurities. An example of this, I swung at him and he ducked. I saw his face duck sideways in the light. He hit me and I sat down on the pavement. As I started to get on my feet he hit me twice. I tried to get up and felt I did not have any legs. (Hemingway, 195). Leading up to this Jake shows a great deal of anti semitism and hate towards Robert Cohn, however, when he is sober Jake holds it back, and at most is passive aggressive. Whereas in this scene, Jake being intoxicated, gets in a argument with Cohn, starts a fight and throws the first punch, and ultimately ends up getting knocked out and losing the fight. The significance of this scene shows us that by attempting to escape through the use of alcohol and in a attempt to abandon his emotions, he only engages in them, doing the exact opposite of what he intended to do through the use of alcohol. According to the article, Painful interpersonal experiences encountered during a time when basic assumptions about the world and their self-images were developing, sent these young persons into their much safer imaginary world. (Somer 14). For many Maladaptive Daydreamers, when daydreaming, will often have their daydreams, even though a complete fantasy, reflect the emotions they feel, because through these daydreams just like Jake's alcoholic tendencies, they express what they fail to express in real life. We see the feelings they didn't express, the words they didn't say, the journeys they didn't make, and the beliefs they didn't defend. Jake in his attempts to cut ties with who he is, fails in cutting ties with his emotions, and in his attempt to escape and dissociate he ends up causing more misery and despair for himself.

Whereas Brett uses neither alcohol nor Maladaptive Daydreaming to escape, but rather uses relationships instead. By trying to seek that happiness and

fulfillment and essentially fill that role of the true love she lost, she only ends up becoming more and more dissatisfied. She uses these relationships thinking they'll fix everything yet they always fail and some poor man's heart is broken for the most part. Brett is especially aware of the role she is playing in her relationships, and she is also aware of the fact that she is hurting others whenever she goes into and out of such relationships, however she continues to act like this. In the end of it all, she leaves, every time she isn't able to get what she wants, or when she isn't able to gain full control of the relationship. She has troubles in her interpersonal relationships just like *Maladaptive Daydreamers*. For example, 'I'm going back to Mike.' I could feel her crying as I held her close. 'He's so damned nice and he's so awful. He's my sort of thing.' (Hemingway 247). After which Pedro Romero and Brett end their relationship, for the first time in the novel we see Brett not only truly upset. But we also see that Brett is capable of emotional depth, and that she is also capable of expressing it, yet she doesn't and in fact tries to avoid doing so in an attempt to dissociate from herself. Furthermore, just like *Maladaptive Daydreamers*, Brett is running, because she's afraid of emotional depth because it means commitment, but it also means coming to terms with who she is and acknowledging what she feels. As a result, Brett chooses not to express her emotions and ends up trying to hide them in an effort of trying not to ever face them, so she engages in these meaningless relationships with no emotional connections. However, by running and trying to get away by having these disconnected relationships, we can see Brett only further disappoints herself, and even though she breaks someone else's heart, she also ends up breaking her own in the process. And in all these attempts of running and the constant search of

<https://assignbuster.com/escapism-and-disassociation-in-the-sun-also-rises/>

fulfillment she only finds more heartache and sorrow, the very things she didn't want to find.

Jake is also very clearly not happy, not only with himself but the life he is living, because of his wound he is not capable of having children nor is he able to be in a relationship with Brett, his true love, which is not only the main source of conflict in the novel, but also one of the main reason for his unhappiness and why he doesn't want to be who he is. Jake is constantly dissociating, shifting focus from himself to immediately something else as though by not thinking about the pain and bitterness, that it'll go away. For example, Undressing, I looked at myself in the mirror of the big armoire beside the bed. That was a typically French way to furnish a room. (Hemingway 38). Through this example we can see the shame Jake feels by immediately changing narration and the main focus from himself to something immensely different. Not only is Jake depressed, unhappy, but he is also not proud of himself, because just like *Maladaptive Daydreamers*, he is not his idealized self. He's this veteran of World War 1, he's suppose to be the traditional male hero, and what better way to show that by him fighting in a war and coming back alive. However, he isn't or at least he doesn't feel like it, but instead he feels insecure because he's emasculated since he doesn't have the ability to have sex anymore. By having Hemingway present Jake the way he is, he allows for Jake to represent the lost generation, including their feelings of aimlessness and unhappiness. He does this by making Jake display the actions that some of those of the lost generation did. Such as becoming an expatriate, and leaving behind America, his home country, which is a clear and physical example of an attempt to escape,

because perhaps by physically leaving Jake could leave behind the part of himself he doesn't like, and give himself a fresh start.

However, by leaving America, living and working in Paris, and traveling all over Europe, Jake doesn't change, he doesn't get that fresh start, he doesn't gain more power or control over his situation. He doesn't magically get with Brett and everything's happily ever after, and he doesn't stop drinking, and he certainly doesn't reach nirvana, but even in the last lines of the novel, Brett's still there beside him, and nothing much changes for her either. If anything, nothing from the beginning of the book changed towards the end, but maybe that's how things are suppose to be. By constantly trying to escape and dissociate from the world around them and who they are, in an attempt to disengage from their emotions as well, how would Brett and Jake ever know what made them happy, or more importantly how would they ever know how to move on, when they couldn't confront the issue head on or be capable of being who they really are. They weren't able to change their situations because they never confronted the issue that was the source of their pain because such confrontations or conflicts are too difficult to face. So they ran and tried to live being something else, just like how Maladaptive Daydreamers dreamed another life, the life they wanted to live, but that's the problem, they dreamed and nothing more, and tried to be something they weren't. They couldn't be happy because they weren't themselves, after all that's what they were running from ultimately leading to their dissatisfaction and despair.